

Characters

- ISSIE, a woman addicted to chaos, 30s
- CHARLES, a man afraid of his own nature, 30s
- LUKE, a jealous man, 30s

The Place:

A island manufactured out of a foreign tourist's dream of Puerto Rico.

Scene 1

Scene One

[The plaza. Party debris on the concrete. Endless sun beats. Issie wears a faux diamond tiara and velvet crush eyeliner with otherwise neutral clothes. Charles wears wraparound shades, a faded T-shirt, jeans and has a can of Red Bull in his hand.]

ISSIE

Everything's Brazilian these days.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

It's where everyone wants to go: bars, beaches, go dance the samba, speak Portuguese, waste away.

CHARLES

I don't.

ISSIE

That's cause you're altered.

CHARLES

What do you mean?

ISSIE

A part of you has been changed.

CHARLES

I'm whole.

ISSIE

Have you checked?

CHARLES

I look at myself every morning.

ISSIE

You should look at night.

CHARLES

The mirror's the same.

ISSIE

No sign of dragonflies?

CHARLES

Where do you think I live? In a field?

ISSIE

I don't know. Insects can go anywhere; embed them in your skin.

CHARLES

I live in a room inside a house. Third floor on the right. The TV is downstairs, along with the kitchen. I have a desk, a bed, and a light. I have shelves made of wood, and a green-cut glass bowl. The mirror is nailed to the door, on the backside. I look at myself before I go out. I check to make sure I'm all right. I inspect my face, my clothes. I throw away any rubbish that rests in my pockets. I am clean. I am ready to face the world. Nothing whatever is altered about me. I am the same as when I was born.

ISSIE

Not the same. You're taller.

CHARLES

But I haven't a scratch.

ISSIE

You don't play rugby?

CHARLES

Chess. That's my sport.

ISSIE

A mental game.

CHARLES

You should try it.

ISSIE

I'm hopeless.

[Pause.]

Who gave you the bowl?

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

Green cut glass in your room?

CHARLES

A friend.

ISSIE

Do you cherish it?

CHARLES

It soothes me.

ISSIE

Just by looking?

CHARLES

I am easily soothed.

ISSIE

You're lovely in your greed.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

I can see you looking. . .

CHARLES

I'll stop.

ISSIE

I meant I could imagine. The bowl in your room, how it soothes. . . I don't mind you looking at me. It takes me

someplace unclean and enlightening. We could all do with a bit of that in this world, under this cruel star.

CHARLES

What do you mean?

ISSIE

The sun. Its yellow eye beaming. . .

CHARLES

You want my shades?

ISSIE

I'm not a coward.

CHARLES

You think protecting my eyes is -?

ISSIE

What would you call it?

[He takes off his shades.]

Losing sleep, eh?

CHARLES

Nights are hard.

ISSIE

You shouldn't drink Red Bull before you go to sleep.

CHARLES

I mix it with gin. Pure energy. It propels me.

ISSIE

Up all night?

CHARLES

My favorite time is four in the morning.

ISSIE

Last call at the bar?

CHARLES

Last call I can find.

ISSIE

Do you choose love or does it choose you?

CHARLES

I don't think about it.

ISSIE

Another night of angelic messages in the clement darkness.

CHARLES

You've got a tongue.

ISSIE

I don't close my wounds.

[Pause.]

CHARLES

I will call you Plum.

ISSIE

That's not my name.

CHARLES

You're open, tender.

ISSIE

Plum baby?

CHARLES

Yes.

ISSIE

I don't want to be rescued.

CHARLES

I wouldn't. I'd never. It's just a name.

ISSIE

Plum. Under the big top, under the red top, a child sees her future: A man afraid of the sun gives a woman a

name. The name becomes her torment: sweet and luscious. Plum. A fantasy undone.

CHARLES

You mock.

ISSIE

I harbor a secret crush; I'm about to spill.

[Charles crushes the can of Red Bull with his hand.]

CHARLES

Why Brazil?

ISSIE

Hmm?

CHARLES

Why do you want to go to Brazil?

ISSIE

I don't.

CHARLES

You said. . .

ISSIE

I said everyone else. Not me. I'm not interested in third world debt.

CHARLES

We're all affected by it.

ISSIE

Are we?

CHARLES

People in Chile can't go out in the sun anymore. The ozone layer's gone.

ISSIE

Environment's not the same as money.

CHARLES

It is if you're making the laws.

ISSIE

Are you in politics?

CHARLES

No.

ISSIE

Then what do you care?

CHARLES

The ongoing destruction of the planet? I care very much.

ISSIE

Then why are you here?

CHARLES

What'd you mean?

ISSIE

This is not Puerto Rico, not the real one. This is a Puerto Rico. A man-made island off the coast of the wrong edge of the continent. Sure, it's got trees and sun and virgin sand, but it's a bit messed up, isn't it? I mean, here we are in a damn version of the Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, because some architect missed his homeland, what it was like before the Wall went up, and after, so he recreates a piece of it here in a Puerto Rico that's not Puerto Rico, because he knows no one will mind; they'll accept the concrete as if it belonged next to sand and trees and the cool swell of the tropics, they'll accept the fact that there's not one sign written in Spanish on this whole island, because they'd rather have something fake than something real in their lives, they'd rather deal with a language they understand. And you say you care about the planet? You're buying into its destruction like everyone else.

CHARLES

It's what I could afford.

ISSIE

The Caribbean is too expensive?

CHARLES

It is for me.

ISSIE

There are deals.

CHARLES

I don't take them. Useless railways, corporate takeovers, the concept of a republic, a true republic,

disintegrating. . .It's all joylessness these days, if you really think about it. A stopover in a fake country is the most natural thing. I'm not contributing to destruction; I'm caught up in it. I drink Red Bull; my body absorbs the taurine, and I don't even know what taurine is, but it gives me energy, so I don't ask, I don't mind, I try to enjoy life, but at the same time I'm trying to figure things out, to protect myself, to safeguard my environment, which isn't even mine, it's someone else's, another law; Job knew to question but in the end he also knew man's ill fortunes cannot be avoided because whether you stand up to God or not, suffering comes with the bargain you make when you're born, and the ongoing crap of your life: deals which are offered to you under the guise of pleasure or pure commerce, or happenstance because you've a broken down car, and where else are you going to go? are just that: crap. And the sooner you figure that out, the better. I can feel the layers disappearing. Cold flower of the sun. . .

ISSIE

Put on your shades.

CHARLES

No. I'm brave.

ISSIE

You could accept cowardice.

CHARLES

You're damn alert for someone who was partying all night.

ISSIE

Did you see me?

CHARLES

Dancing diva. . .

ISSIE

I wear too much eyeliner.

CHARLES

I could soak it up.

ISSIE

What do you mean?

CHARLES

I don't know. I say things . . . I don't have to mean anything.

ISSIE

You've a broken down car.

CHARLES

Yeah.

ISSIE

Let me guess. '68 Firebird.

CHARLES

You steal it?

ISSIE

I saw it. You were showing off.

CHARLES

It's a lousy car.

ISSIE

Looks flush.

CHARLES

Eats up gas. I should sell it.

ISSIE

Could get you a nice fortune.

CHARLES

I'm not interested in being rich.

ISSIE

Coward.

CHARLES

Honesty and cowardice have nothing to do with each other.

[Pause.]

ISSIE

I want to go to Canada.

CHARLES

The best-preserved, manicured, purple haze-skunk-hybrid bud is in Canada.

ISSIE

I've got asthma. Smoking does me in.

CHARLES

Even grass?

ISSIE

Everything. Are you an expert?

CHARLES

Not really.

ISSIE

You whipped out the facts right quick.

CHARLES

Knowledge. Things get stored in the brain. Curse of the age.

ISSIE

Information?

CHARLES

Yes. We've got more information than we know what to do with. I'd like to cut down the power lines; See what becomes of all our pixels and links. Back to the Stone Age we'd be.

ISSIE

Lost.

CHARLES

Building an eyrie with a ten-penny nail.

ISSIE

Would we?

CHARLES

High up? I think so. We'd perch ourselves in a stronghold and not come down.

ISSIE

Are you that afraid?

CHARLES

My only fear is that I will not be able to live up to it.

ISSIE

. . .I can't seem to get hold of information. It slips right through me. Thread-snap-loose.

CHARLES

Has that something to do with your asthma?

ISSIE

I don't know what it's to do with. Maybe I missed something along the way, a vital ingredient. A person can only do so many things. I try to keep up, go to church bazaars, listen to park wogs, but. . .I can't really remember things. Everything goes up into the ether.

CHARLES

The all-pervading, infinitely elastic mass-less medium formerly postulated as the medium of propagation of electromagnetic waves?

ISSIE

No. The heavens.

CHARLES

Same thing.

ISSIE

Doesn't sound like it.

CHARLES

One's religion, one's physics.

ISSIE

Ether's not a religious word.

CHARLES

Heaven is.

ISSIE

Are you an atheist?

CHARLES

I try to be.

ISSIE

Why?

CHARLES

There's no point believing in anything. It complicates life.

ISSIE

Gets in the way?

CHARLES

I believe it does.

ISSIE

. . . Well, I don't have the skeleton key to the universe. I know that much.

CHARLES

Then you're floating?

ISSIE

If I could only go to Canada. . .

CHARLES

What's there?

ISSIE

I think I was conceived there.

CHARLES

In the entire country?

ISSIE

In Montreal.

CHARLES

Why do you think that?

ISSIE

I dream of Montreal all the time. It must be a sign, right? Of something profound within me?

CHARLES

Something chemical, you mean?

ISSIE

Yes.

CHARLES

Could be a genetic error.

ISSIE

You're cruel.

CHARLES

I'm flawed. We all are. Weakness is attractive.

ISSIE

And shape is much more interesting than sound.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

Shut down.

CHARLES

I can't.

ISSIE

Give yourself a wide screen angle. Soar, arc and turn. Experience something beyond language, outside yourself.

CHARLES

I'm afraid.

ISSIE

Wear my tiara. It's fake. Like everything else. It's a damn party favor.

CHARLES

I'm not a clown.

ISSIE

Is that what you think I think of you?

CHARLES

I don't think anything.

[Pause.]

Alien sun.

ISSIE

If only we were in Canada. . .

CHARLES

We'd be covered in snow.

ISSIE

Not now.

CHARLES

It always snows there.

ISSIE

Don't you like it?

CHARLES

I like spring.

ISSIE

Birds chirping?

CHARLES

The narrow path between freedom and belonging.

[Pause.]

ISSIE

Be true.

CHARLES

That's easy.

ISSIE

It's not.

CHARLES

If you're willing. . . .

ISSIE

What do you mean?

CHARLES

Trust yourself. Trust me.

ISSIE

How do I do that?

CHARLES

You just do.

ISSIE

You're lying.

CHARLES

You don't trust me.

ISSIE

I like it brutal.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

It's the most exciting thing.

CHARLES

You're screwed up.

ISSIE

Call me Issie.

CHARLES

Issie.

ISSIE

Say it again.

CHARLES

Plum.

ISSIE

You've got a nice voice.

CHARLES

I work on the radio.

ISSIE

Have I heard you?

CHARLES

You might have.

ISSIE

I only listen to one station.

CHARLES

Talk?

ISSIE

No. I hate talk. Junk space, isn't it?

CHARLES

What do you listen to?

ISSIE

News from the world.

CHARLES

You get that on one station?

ISSIE

Yeah.

CHARLES

Where's this?

ISSIE

Inverness.

CHARLES

Is that where you're from?

ISSIE

Not anymore.

CHARLES

Afraid of the monster?

ISSIE

What?

CHARLES

Loch Ness. . .

ISSIE

You don't believe. . .?

CHARLES

There are stories. . .

ISSIE

They're fake. Like everything else.

CHARLES

You think?

ISSIE

Where are you from?

CHARLES

Maryland.

ISSIE

Jagged shapes. That's what it's like.

CHARLES

The whole state?

ISSIE

Look at it. From above. It's jagged.

CHARLES

I'll remember that. Next time I fly.

ISSIE

You've got wings?

CHARLES

On a plane. You don't believe. . .?

ISSIE

No. Of course not. Angels are stupid. Wings on birds. That's all. Be my angel.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

Make love to me.

CHARLES

Now?

ISSIE

I hate talk. You're not on the radio now, are you?

CHARLES

Have you ever listened to me?

ISSIE

What's it to you?

CHARLES

I like to be recognized.

ISSIE

. . .Charles. Is that enough for you?

CHARLES

. . . If you don't trust me, we won't be off to much of a start, will we?

ISSIE

Think of it as the end. The world's got a terminal condition. We haven't got a chance.

CHARLES

That's brutal.

ISSIE

Yes.

[Dark.]

Scene 2

Scene Two

[Outside the garage. Charles wears the tiara. Luke, a mechanic, looks at him.]

LUKE

It'll take a bit.

CHARLES

Fix it.

LUKE

You're in a hurry?

CHARLES

My heart's so full of her, I can't swallow.

LUKE

Breathe.

CHARLES

I am. I have. Nothing works. She's a damn sprite.

LUKE

Are we talking about the same-?

CHARLES

Issie. Yes.

LUKE

Isabel?

CHARLES

What? You don't think she is. . .?

LUKE

I don't know her as well. We danced a couple of times. That's not enough to tell.

CHARLES

I wish I had danced with her.

LUKE

You mean you-?

CHARLES

We found each other in the morning. She had a crush on me.

LUKE

And now?

CHARLES

And now I'm starting to remember a language I've never even spoken. She makes me think things. Deep, personal questions about my nature. Tell me. Do I look like a coward?

LUKE

You look how you look.

CHARLES

On the radio, nobody can see me. I have complete power. I know exactly what to do. I stress a word, I drop a phrase, I test my pitch. . . I've had people fall in love with my voice. Not that I want them to, but it's flattering, it makes me feel good to know that with breath and tone alone I can. . . , but Issie hates the radio. She only listens to one goddamn station. And in the lottery of evolution, and everything that's left us, what does that mean?

LUKE

You're wearing a tiara.

CHARLES

Precisely. I'm wearing her goddamn tiara. I've been altered completely.

LUKE

So, you want to leave.

CHARLES

I want you to fix my car.

LUKE

Replace the spark plugs?

CHARLES

You're the expert. Not me.

LUKE

We're in Puerto Rico. Things move how they move.

CHARLES

Not fast, you mean?

LUKE

We're on Latin time.

CHARLES

Yes, but this isn't the Puerto Rico. We're not in the Caribbean. So, Latin time doesn't mean anything here.

LUKE

We've got palm trees.

CHARLES

Are you listening to me?

LUKE

There's sun, plenty of sand, timeless speed. . .I think of this as Puerto Rico.

CHARLES

What do you want?

LUKE

I haven't asked for anything.

CHARLES

No, but you're going to. I'm saving you the trouble.

LUKE

Some things must be observed, Charles.

CHARLES

Like what?

LUKE

I can't manufacture spark plugs in a day.

CHARLES

No, but you can order them, get them shipped express, work all night, and have my car ready.

LUKE

You don't need a car on an island.

CHARLES

I'll need one when I leave, when I take the damn ferry across and drive back home.

LUKE

Do you like your job?

CHARLES

Of course.

LUKE

Does it fulfill you?

CHARLES

What do you mean?

LUKE

Like a woman's love?

CHARLES

I'm loath to let light in on. . .

LUKE

Answer me.

CHARLES

Will you fix my car?

LUKE

This life is about loving and being loved, doing the right thing, and being at peace with yourself at the end of the day. I've learned that much.

CHARLES

Luke.

LUKE

Luca.

CHARLES

That's not your name.

LUKE

It is if I make it so.

CHARLES

Luke, you're a smart man. I give you money, you fix my car. Simple?

LUKE

Why are you in such a hurry? What have you got to lose?

CHARLES

Everything.

[Light blinks on the sign above the garage.]

Scene 3

Scene Three

[Twilight. Issie crosses a river by foot.]

ISSIE

Plum he calls me, I turn I quiver, no sound, he beats, I bleed I will not close my wounds, I will not drown, he hasn't got me yet Not by a mile, not by seventeen hundred five hundred trillion, he'll never get me I'll build an eyrie, like he said, out of timber and hard truths I'll look at him from above, and he won't see me It's in the letting, isn't it? If you let, then. . . but if you don't. . . I could watch him for eternity and he'd never know This is a secret I will not yield, this is my power On dark days he'll whisper to me Plum baby, and I will not answer, I'll let him believe Such is the way of all things when they are made in the heat You've got to take what comes with it, even if the sun is fake and the air is a plastic sleeve Plum, he says, and I let him because Issie isn't me, isn't what I wanted I dream of Montreal, lights on narrow streets, signs in Quebecois, and people skiing down alleyways Origin is what I seek, what I've come for, I was a gleam once inside two skins that met in poverty I want to see the exact place where first ripple, first light, first blink became me I want to trade my life for another, and this time. . . no tiaras or mesh gear or candle-lit feet, No calling out at four in the damn morning to someone who doesn't know me, but smiles just the same Because he's been brought up that way; screw propriety, let down your Lenten voices, we've got an eclipse Brutal as can be, guard your eyes in your wrap-around, everything will be shiny, and tough, I can see it Plum, plum under the arc of the disguised sun, And what are your hands going to do, eh? What can they do to the likes of me? I'm crossing a river by foot, and my soles are dry.

[Issie touches ground. She is bleeding from her left eye.]

Scene 4

Scene Four

[A partial eclipse of the sun. Luke holds Charles down.]

CHARLES

I didn't do anything.

LUKE

You hit her.

CHARLES

I didn't mean. . .

LUKE

You think with money you can solve everything?

CHARLES

You're hurting me.

LUKE

You see this?

[Pulls out a nail from his pocket.]

This is a ten-penny nail. I'll puncture you like a goddamn tire.

CHARLES

I'll call the police.

LUKE

And tell them what?

CHARLES

It was the taurine.

LUKE

You're out of your mind.

CHARLES

I had six or seven Red Bulls; I didn't know what I was doing. . .

LUKE

En la tierra del sordo, el mudo canta.

CHARLES

What are you saying?

LUKE

Words in a language you don't understand.

CHARLES

That's Spanish, isn't it? I took Spanish in high school. I recognize the sounds.

LUKE

Tell me.

CHARLES

What?

LUKE

The words you know.

CHARLES

I don't remember.

LUKE

Liar.

CHARLES

Tierra. Earth. *Canta.* Sing.

LUKE

Is that all?

CHARLES

What difference does it make?

LUKE

It's important to remember what you've learned.

CHARLES

Homilies.

LUKE

How were you brought up, Charles?

CHARLES

What do you mean?

LUKE

Were you instructed in proper behavior, in how to be a human being, or were you left to grow wild?

CHARLES

I was a proper child. I listened to my parents attentively. I never muttered under my breath. I was respectful of everyone and everything.

LUKE

Liar.

CHARLES

May the truth console me.

LUKE

Is that a prayer?

CHARLES

I don't know.

LUKE

What about Issie?

CHARLES

Plum.

LUKE

Were you respectful of her being?

CHARLES

She was my plum baby.

LUKE

Was she soft?

CHARLES

Open and giving.

LUKE

Did you watch her bleed?

CHARLES

I didn't do anything.

LUKE

She came into the garage. We went dancing, Issie and me. I remember. She could have had a thing for me.

CHARLES

I doubt it.

LUKE

You don't think I'm a looker?

CHARLES

Get off me.

LUKE

Why don't you fight, Charles? Throw me a punch.

CHARLES

You've got me, haven't you? I can't move.

LUKE

You inspire pity.

CHARLES

Stop.

LUKE

Your car sits in a junk heap.

CHARLES

My '68 Firebird?

LUKE

It's gone the way of old songs and dreams.

CHARLES

I paid you good money to fix that car. It was my one glory. You know how much that car cost me?

LUKE

You care more about the car than about Issie. Screw all what happens to her, right?

CHARLES

No, but. . . what'd you do with it?

LUKE

I told you. It's in a heap.

CHARLES

Bastard.

LUKE

You want to hit me now?

CHARLES

I could murder you.

LUKE

How would you do it?

CHARLES

Shot through the heart.

LUKE

Melodrama, eh?

CHARLES

If you didn't want to fix the car, you could have told me.

LUKE

I took your money. Why would I tell you anything?

CHARLES

Damn spark plugs.

LUKE

You're going to cry now?

CHARLES

Fuck you.

LUKE

I think you are. I think you've got tears.

CHARLES

Let me go.

LUKE

What did Issie ask of you that was so much?

CHARLES

She didn't ask for anything, except for me to be true. And I was.

LUKE

Take out your tongue.

CHARLES

What?

LUKE

Like children do when they have no shame and mock everyone.

[Charles sticks his tongue out. Luke punctures it with the ten-penny nail. Charles cries. Dark.]

Scene 5

Scene Five

[Issie sits in an eyrie. She holds a tape recorder in her hands. She listens to Charles' voice. He sounds like a child.]

CHARLES

(VO)

There was an eclipse. I caught a glimpse of you. But you weren't looking. You were dreaming of Brazil, weren't you? I could tell. I could tell everything about you right from the start. You're one of those women who don't hide, the kind that breathe danger and folly. Like the ones you see in the museum, in paintings from another time. You were moving. I saw you. You went past the river. You wanted to protect me. No chance of that. I've been found out. Truth stripped me clean. I've listened to that station you told me about, the one with news from the world. It's crap. I don't believe any of it. Except about things ending. I believe that. World's got a cancer. Yeah. Something terminal, which can't be fixed. Not even in a man-made place, which is supposed to be immune from everything. I thought "I'll get myself so high on taurine, on pure energy, I'll be rid of whatever's corrupt in me." But transience and the rapid passing of things got hold of me. Darkness drops. Silence waits. The mere thought of you sends me. I choose love. It doesn't choose me. The shadow eats the moon. Everything tempts.

[Dark.]

Scene 6

Scene Six

[Luke places a strip of gauze over Issie's eye.]

ISSIE

Did you hurt him?

LUKE

Be still.

ISSIE

You shouldn't blame him. He's not at fault.

LUKE

You defend him?

ISSIE

He has my heart.

LUKE

How can you say that? You can't even see out your eye.

ISSIE

Temporary blindness. It will pass.

LUKE

You're forgiving.

ISSIE

I want to see him.

LUKE

If I called you Plum, would you want to see me?

ISSIE

Stop.

LUKE

You've been here too long, Isabel.

ISSIE

I like this fake place. It suits me.

LUKE

You're not meant for it.

ISSIE

Where would I go? Maryland?

LUKE

Inverness.

ISSIE

No. I'm not going back there.

LUKE

We had a good time.

ISSIE

We drank too much.

LUKE

I slept on the floor wrapped in a blanket.

ISSIE

You told me stories.

LUKE

I ate hasenfeffer. Remember?

ISSIE

Marinated rabbit stew. You got sick. I almost had to take you to the hospital.

LUKE

The rabbit wasn't cooked right.

ISSIE

Nothing was. Was it -?

LUKE

The restaurant off the road with the sign in front wrapped in black.

ISSIE

Right. And when we asked what it was -?

LUKE

They said it had been a massage parlor once, and they hadn't gotten around to fixing the sign, so they just wrapped it instead, to "obscure the view."

ISSIE

Strange times.

LUKE

You liked it.

ISSIE

Yeah. I was much stranger then.

LUKE

You're not now?

ISSIE

Let's not fight.

LUKE

I'm not. I'm taking care of you.

ISSIE

I'll be all right.

[referring to bandage]

Does it look funny?

LUKE

It looks how it looks.

ISSIE

You know what I mean.

LUKE

Will he like you like this?

ISSIE

You're making fun of me.

LUKE

I don't understand you. How can you want to see him again? After what he did?

ISSIE

I asked him to.

LUKE

What?

ISSIE

I told him I liked it brutal.

LUKE

What'd you tell him that for?

ISSIE

Because I do.

LUKE

You're lying. I know you.

ISSIE

I'm not the same person I was in Inverness.

LUKE

This place has turned your mind to garbage. We should leave now. I got money.

ISSIE

Give it back to him.

LUKE

You're a fucking joke.

ISSIE

I mean it.

LUKE

What about me, eh? I'm the one tending to you.

ISSIE

Don't.

LUKE

You're in a spiral.

ISSIE

I don't know what I am. Maybe this is my nature.

LUKE

Walking around half-blind. . .

ISSIE

Without me, he hasn't got a chance. Can't you see that?

LUKE

And you're going to be his martyr?

ISSIE

I'm going to be his saint.

[Dark.]

Scene 7

Scene Seven

[CHARLES sits in the junk heap midst the shards of his car. He is trying to pray. Issie approaches. She has a small cherry pie in her hand.]

CHARLES

Damn rosary. Can't remember the order of it.

ISSIE

Thinking back on your Catholic school days?

CHARLES

Issie.

ISSIE

I brought you cherry pie.

CHARLES

I can't eat. My. . .

ISSIE

I know.

CHARLES

Bastard.

ISSIE

Luke's got a temper. Sometimes he doesn't know what to do with it.

CHARLES

I thought you were gone. I left you some words on a taperecorder. . .

ISSIE

I found them. In the eyrie.

CHARLES

When'd you make an eyrie?

ISSIE

I didn't. It was there. You know that. Across the river, high up, safe. I could see the entire island. Did you make it for me?

CHARLES

I made it for myself. A place to hide. But then, I didn't see the point. I'm not good at hiding.

ISSIE

You like being found out?

CHARLES

I prefer anonymity, but I can't seem to get it. Did you listen to the. . .?

ISSIE

They were nice words.

[Pause.]

CHARLES

I'm sorry.

ISSIE

I'll be fine.

CHARLES

You should hit me.

ISSIE

What will that solve?

CHARLES

It'll make me feel better.

ISSIE

Retribution? I don't believe in it.

CHARLES

Are you becoming an atheist?

ISSIE

No. I just don't believe it'll do any good. You feel guilty, you feel ashamed, live with it. My hurting you back won't erase anything. What's done is done.

CHARLES

I wish Luke thought like you.

ISSIE

Luke's a different kind of creature. Retribution is part of his system. I picked up the pie at the bakery. It was fresh on the shelf. Warm. You should have a bite.

CHARLES

I see what you're doing.

ISSIE

What?

CHARLES

You come here all nice. You're looking to poison me. Slow death, that's your game.

ISSIE

I wouldn't. . .

CHARLES

I know your type. I've read all the right books.

ISSIE

I'll leave it then.

[sets pie down]

If you want it. . .

CHARLES

Damn cherry pie like I was a kid.

ISSIE

Do with it what you will.

CHARLES

I can't work anymore. On the radio. Not like this.

ISSIE

Your voice is fine.

CHARLES

It's got a defect. My tongue don't work right. I've got nothing. No car, no job. . .

ISSIE

We're a fucking pair of loons.

CHARLES

We look a sight.

[Pause.]

ISSIE

I think I'm leaving tomorrow.

CHARLES

Getting away?

ISSIE

This place doesn't work for me anymore.

CHARLES

Going to Brazil and dance the samba?

ISSIE

I don't know. Do you want to come with?

CHARLES

I couldn't. . .

ISSIE

Don't be afraid to look at me.

CHARLES

I can't. . . not after what I. . . I look, I think what I've done. . .

ISSIE

I'm your Plum. Remember that.

CHARLES

Stupid name.

ISSIE

Let yourself go, Charles. Let everything fall away. Be hungry, take comfort, let down your guard. There is no love without a bit of madness to go with it. I'm proof of that. And if love scares you, because it's too much, too soon, too quick And you can't understand it, because you're not meant to, not ever, not really, Then seek friendship because it is all we have sometimes. What's a slice of pie going to do? Remind you of your childhood, of who you were once, Of your appetite for indulgent things, sweet things, unnecessary things? Not everything is necessary in this life. Look at your car, what's left of it. . . More junk to mess up the ozone. That's all it is now. And one day there won't be an ozone. And we'll all be like those folks at the bottom of Chile: defenseless, with our heads down, and hoping for a bit of mercy. I come to you shameless, brazen and a fool, half blind and out of orbit. I offer you, as I offered before: my very being, only this time I've given up on the shiny and hollow I used to cling to; I don't wish for brutality anymore. I only wish. The answer is unknown.

CHARLES

When'd you become a saint?

ISSIE

When I stopped dancing.

CHARLES

I don't know if I like this side of you.

ISSIE

I'm not asking you to.

CHARLES

. . .This was my favorite car, you know. I spent a lot of money on it.

ISSIE

What was her name? Come on. I know you gave the car a name. Most men do. You can tell me.

CHARLES

You'll think I'm an idiot.

ISSIE

I already do.

CHARLES

Mean one.

ISSIE

Sorry.

CHARLES

. . .Ondine.

ISSIE

What?

CHARLES

That's her name.

ISSIE

You named your Firebird after a water nymph?

CHARLES

I liked the sound.

ISSIE

And now that you've proved unfaithful to her, she's returned to sea.

CHARLES

What?

ISSIE

That's the myth. The nymph acquires a soul by marrying a mortal, but if the mortal is unfaithful. . .

CHARLES

I don't think of it like that.

ISSIE

That's good. Because it's a lousy myth. She suffers and he goes scot-free.

CHARLES

You do believe in it.

ISSIE

What's that?

CHARLES

Retribution.

ISSIE

I suppose a part of me does.

[Pause.]

CHARLES

I'll have some pie. It hurts to talk for too long.

[He eats.]

ISSIE

Is it still hot?

CHARLES

Yeah.

ISSIE

Don't burn your. . . sorry.

CHARLES

I won't.

[He continues eating. A shooting star goes across the sky. Issie looks up, but it's gone. Lights fade.]

Scene 8

Scene Eight

[Luke stands in a field of dragonflies.]

LUKE

Bite flesh, rip your wings, have a good piece of me, I'm nothing. Indebted to her love, sacrificed at her damn altar, I care for her and she chases after some bastard who strikes without so much as a wink. Bite flesh, destroy me, I'll be better off in some other world. She doesn't need me. She chides me for protecting her, and doing that bastard in When I had every right. And I didn't even hurt him. Not like I could have. He deserved much worse from me than what I gave. I could have tossed him in the water, Burned him in his car, any number of things. I was kind. She should appreciate that Instead of turning round and acting like she's not good enough for him. I even got her money so she could go to Montreal like she always dreamed. And yeah, I thought I'd go with her. That was the plan way back when we were in Inverness And we had all the time in the world to drink and hide under the coverlids, and sleepwalk; Man, we slept-walked for days. I think it was all the beer we drank, or maybe the whiskey. We'd get up at night with our eyes closed and rummage about. Issie walked all the way out to sea once, said she wanted to see the monster, when we both knew it was fake. I told her "Go ahead. Find the Loch Ness." She never did. But she came down with a damn cold after that that lasted a good long while. And I put up with it. I put up with everything. And now she doesn't want me. She says I'm fine right here on this damn island fixing cars, as if that was my dream in life. I'm not a mechanic. It's not what

I'm cut out for. I would like nothing more than to have a bar, or a shop of my own, a goddamn restaurant. That's right. That's a dream. To have my own place, serve customers my favorite delicacies, watch their mouths water. I could be a chef like that Wolfgang. Cater to the stars. She'd want me then. Everyone likes fame, even if they won't admit it. It's the damn curse of our age. You're made to feel like you're damn nothing unless you're famous. I'll show her. I'll do what's fair, honest, and true. Bite flesh, have a go at me, I can do anything.

[Luke disappears in the mass of dragonflies.]

Scene 9

Scene Nine

[A bath-house. Charles is sitting, a towel wrapped around his waist. Luke is sitting next to him. He has insect bites on his arms and legs. He also has a towel wrapped around his waist.]

LUKE

What do you make of her?

CHARLES

I'm trying to rest.

LUKE

She's worn you out already?

CHARLES

A bit of peace.

LUKE

I'm not fighting. I'm in a good mood. Didn't Issie tell you? I'm going to open a restaurant.

CHARLES

That's good.

LUKE

You don't believe me?

CHARLES

I believe everything.

LUKE

Making fun of me?

CHARLES

No.

LUKE

. . .Your voice is better.

CHARLES

I've been practicing.

LUKE

Think you'll get your job back?

CHARLES

No.

LUKE

You must hate me.

CHARLES

I don't.

LUKE

You must feel something.

CHARLES

Pity.

LUKE

Why? Cause of my insect bites? I dared them to bite me. I brought it on myself.

CHARLES

Congratulations on your victory.

LUKE

I don't like that.

CHARLES

What?

LUKE

Sarcasm. It's very rude. I haven't been rude to you.

CHARLES

I didn't mean to be.

LUKE

Part of your nature?

CHARLES

What kind of creature are you?

LUKE

What do you mean?

CHARLES

That's Issie's word for you: "creature."

LUKE

She's never called me that.

CHARLES

Goat? Pig?

LUKE

You know, I didn't come here to be insulted. I came to relax, ease off the bites.

CHARLES

I was trying to determine which animal, that's all.

LUKE

Human. All right? Had your fun?

[Pause.]

CHARLES

Steam feels good.

LUKE

This is the best bath-house on the island. The Russians own it. Poured in a ton of money to build this thing. Opened up a couple of weeks ago, couldn't get a soul to come in. Now, it's the one reason people come here. World famous baths.

CHARLES

Is that why people come here?

LUKE

Yeah. Didn't you?

CHARLES

No.

LUKE

Why'd you come here, then?

CHARLES

I wanted to go to an island, have some time away, first time away I've had in a while. This was fairly close, and fit my pocket.

LUKE

Cheap. Yeah. Everything's cheap here.

CHARLES

It's turned out expensive.

LUKE

For you? I suppose it has.

CHARLES

No car, no job. . .

LUKE

You've got Issie.

CHARLES

I don't know if I want her. She confuses me.

LUKE

She means well.

CHARLES

I don't think I want anyone. I'm not cut out for dependency. I'm too jealous. I think too much.

LUKE

You obsess?

CHARLES

Every minute of the day. It's not healthy.

LUKE

Some people like it.

CHARLES

Do you?

LUKE

I'm not the obsessive type.

CHARLES

Aren't you?

LUKE

Maybe a bit, but not like that: every minute. That's a Latin thing. Are you sure you're not -?

CHARLES

I don't think so. Who knows who anyone is these days. We're all mixed up. Too many generations, too many countries. . . I suppose I've a bit of everything in me.

LUKE

Issie's part Turkish. Did she tell you that?

CHARLES

No.

LUKE

I think like one-eighth of someone somewhere. . . Way back in her family. Gypsies, I think.

CHARLES

Is that why she moves around?

LUKE

Could be.

CHARLES

I'd like to move around. Be a nomad. No passport.

LUKE

Why don't you?

CHARLES

In dreams begin responsibility.

LUKE

What's that?

CHARLES

A saying.

LUKE

You can have dreams without responsibilities.

CHARLES

Like your restaurant scheme?

LUKE

Yeah. I thought of it, I'll give it a try.

CHARLES

And if it doesn't work out?

LUKE

Try something else.

CHARLES

You have no plans in your life.

LUKE

They get fouled up anyway. What's the point?

CHARLES

. . .Have you got calamine lotion?

LUKE

Not on me.

CHARLES

You should put some on later. For the bites. They won't go away easy.

LUKE

I don't want them to. They're my badge.

CHARLES

Of what?

LUKE

Defiance against love.

CHARLES

. . . We've both been altered.

LUKE

It's the Issie effect.

CHARLES

Is that what it is?

LUKE

What else could it be?

CHARLES

. . . I think I will hit you.

LUKE

Now?

CHARLES

You're half-naked, vulnerable. I couldn't think of a better time.

LUKE

Well, not too hard, eh? I've got my bites to take care of.

CHARLES

It won't hurt a bit.

[Charles strikes Luke. Blackout.]

Scene 10

Scene Ten

[Issie in the eyrie. She looks down.]

ISSIE

High up you think you're going to fall. You pray and religion almost saves you. I look for him in the ether. I try to see if he'll recognize me, but he turns away. He's afraid. He's starting to forget my name. I thought I had out-danced thought. I thought the world would bend to me. Nothing holds true. Memory fades. The still vanishing point is what I have left. Gleam dreams. Wriggle and cry. Signs blinking neon. Work a miracle, if you can
From this tiny place inside the blood balloon, inside the membrane which holds me. This is how I remember

before birth, before popping out and screaming. Signs blinking, blood, wriggle and cry. Ripple and slide of words forming themselves in my brain.

["Good evening, my friend. Where does this road lead? I am coming with you. I am coming with you.]"

Bonsoir, mon ami. Ce chemin, ou mene-t-il? Je vous suis. Je vous suis. My nail-less fingers reaching out toward snow and lights. Wait for me. The truth of origin is a lie. I don't even know who I am. And yet I cling, I want, my thoughts turn, Everything must be figured out. Why? What's the need? What's the damn rush in this world? Heart-smitten with emotion we fool ourselves into thinking there's anyone out there to whom we belong. The myth of belonging poisons us. We are alone and nothing more. Creatures destined for a cold night. The brutal used to sustain me, but its hardness has worn me down And in its place, in its place A letting go sweetness, the ghost of the present, and I am unfound. A shooting star went across the sky. It was missed by all, yet left a trace of its fire. If I possess it, will I drown? If I possess it, will you find me? Look now. This is what I am, and most truly: unfinished.

[Issie slips the bandage off her eye. She is still for a moment, then falls backwards off her perch in the eyrie.]

Scene 11

Scene Eleven

[A beat-up Luke finds Issie on the ground. The tape recorder plays involuntarily. It is Charles' voice. Fragments from previous message re-found and played out.]

CHARLES

(VO)

There was an eclipse. I caught a glimpse. But you weren't looking. You were dreaming of Brazil. Of pure sun and music and wasting away, beaches that go on for days, and easy, undisrupted pleasure. You were dreaming. I saw you. The dream extended to my eyelids and I wept thinking of where it begun. On the plaza, at the party, at the slight insistence of your nod towards me. I waited for the dream to end. But it wouldn't, light, love, burning darkness, crushing heart and the weight of a cancerous world, there you were, watching me, guiding me, looking out for my being, Un-deserved attention, what am I to do with you? Is this a blessing? Are you my blessing? Here's a peek, an eyehole, a pop-up view. Can you live with this? Can you live with me? World's got a cancer. Yeah. Something terminal which can't be fixed. I could have told you, but you wouldn't listen. I could have told you everything right from the start. I am nothing but a shadow who eats the moon.

[Luke cradles Issie, and licks his wounds. Lights fade.]

Scene 12

Scene Twelve

[Daylight. Issie is standing. Luke is sitting on the ground.]

ISSIE

I could see the whole world for a minute, every bit of it, every undiscovered corner, and then I fell.

LUKE

I found you.

ISSIE

You held me. I felt your arms.

LUKE

You slept for a long time. I thought you might be dead. But not a scratch.

ISSIE

I felt nothing. I didn't even know I had fallen. One moment, a view of the world, and the next, complete darkness.

LUKE

You cried.

ISSIE

In sleep?

LUKE

As if you were mourning.

ISSIE

I must have been dreaming.

LUKE

I wiped your tears.

ISSIE

You've always been kind.

LUKE

And you've always resented my kindness. Why?

ISSIE

I'm foolish. I don't notice things.

LUKE

You notice plenty.

ISSIE

Not in the moment, I don't. I notice things later when things have passed, gone.

LUKE

So, you'll love me when I'm no longer near you?

ISSIE

I don't know that I'll ever love you at all.

LUKE

Soothing words to a wounded man.

ISSIE

I'm sorry.

LUKE

You're not. You take pleasure in it.

ISSIE

I'm not like that.

LUKE

Aren't you? Look what your beloved torment did to me. I'm all bruised.

ISSIE

He used his hands.

LUKE

And I didn't, is that right? I'm the brute?

ISSIE

Let's not fight.

LUKE

I saved you.

ISSIE

I don't like being rescued. You know that about me.

LUKE

If I hadn't found you. . .

ISSIE

I don't know what would have happened. I would've kept on dreaming, I suppose.

LUKE

About him? All this over a boy?

ISSIE

He's not a boy.

LUKE

He acts like one.

ISSIE

Poor thing.

LUKE

Are you going to pity me? Is that all I inspire in people?

ISSIE

Let me look at you.

LUKE

He wouldn't stop beating me. He's got ferocious hands.

ISSIE

You'll heal.

LUKE

I wanted to fight back, but I had promised myself I wouldn't for your sake.

ISSIE

Thank you.

LUKE

. . .You still love him.

ISSIE

He's a crush.

LUKE

Does that mean it will pass?

ISSIE

All things are possible.

LUKE

You've nothing broken. I checked. You fell from a great height, but you're all right.

ISSIE

Must be a miracle.

LUKE

They still happen?

ISSIE

I'm proof.

LUKE

Heaven help us all.

ISSIE

Heaven help us.

[Issie kisses Luke's bruises. Lights fade.]

Scene 13

Scene Thirteen

[The dock near the ferry. Issie is seated. Charles stands.]

ISSIE

Did you have to hurt him?

CHARLES

He asked me to.

ISSIE

That's my line.

CHARLES

It's mine now.

ISSIE

I've infected you.

CHARLES

I've always been like this. I just didn't know.

ISSIE

Everyone possesses a measure of cruelty.

CHARLES

And its opposite.

[Pause.]

ISSIE

Have you thought about it?

CHARLES

Montreal?

ISSIE

We could be happy there.

CHARLES

I was conceived somewhere else.

ISSIE

Where?

CHARLES

I don't know. Maybe I'm Turkish.

ISSIE

Not a chance.

CHARLES

You don't know.

ISSIE

I don't know anything.

CHARLES

What are you doing? Are you crying?

ISSIE

No.

CHARLES

You don't have to go.

ISSIE

I can't stay here.

CHARLES

Be a nomad forever.

ISSIE

What's the glamour in that?

CHARLES

There is none. But you learn a lot. You see things.

ISSIE

I'm still slightly blurry.

CHARLES

Go slow.

ISSIE

You have an answer for everything. When'd you become so wise?

CHARLES

Since I met you.

ISSIE

Don't flatter me. We're past that.

CHARLES

I'm sorry.

ISSIE

And don't apologize. Everyone does nothing but apologize to me. I can't stand it. It makes me feel guilty. And I don't have anything to be guilty about.

CHARLES

Nothing at all?

ISSIE

No.

CHARLES

You're brave.

ISSIE

I'm shy as a rabbit.

CHARLES

I wouldn't say that.

ISSIE

You don't know me very well.

CHARLES

Shy one of my heart.

ISSIE

Don't mock.

CHARLES

I'm being kind. Forgive me if it doesn't sound right.

ISSIE

You need practice.

CHARLES

We all do. Just a bit. Don't you think?

ISSIE

. . .What do you want most of all?

CHARLES

Most of everything?

ISSIE

Yes.

CHARLES

To be loved for who I am. Completely.

ISSIE

And if I told you, I could give you that?

CHARLES

I still wouldn't go.

ISSIE

. . .What I want most of all is to be free.

CHARLES

In a democratic society, that's somewhat possible.

ISSIE

There's the ferry.

CHARLES

Wave Puerto Rico good-bye.

ISSIE

I don't know what this is, what we've. . .

CHARLES

I don't either.

ISSIE

Will you think of me?

CHARLES

And damage done.

ISSIE

I asked for it.

CHARLES

That's my line.

ISSIE

I want it back.

CHARLES

You shouldn't want it at all. Toss it away, give it to the winds, they'll have better use for it.

[The sound of the ferry's horn. Time Shift.]

ISSIE

Atlas of a new atlas

LUKE

[appears]

Flower of a new seed

CHARLES

This is a beginning

ISSIE

At the end of a dark time

LUKE

We find ourselves in mourning

CHARLES

Seeking forgiveness

ISSIE

Wanting nothing

LUKE

and paying the price.

[Breath.]

ISSIE

In the corner

CHARLES

In the light

LUKE

In the deep down remembering which catches you at night

ISSIE

Think this

CHARLES

Think this

LUKE

Think what will lift you

ISSIE

Dirty

CHARLES

Cruel

LUKE

Hard won and overeager

ISSIE

And let your thoughts move at the speed of light

CHARLES

Timeless, without care, unbounded and free

ISSIE

Let your thoughts move the spheres and realign them ever so slightly,

LUKE

so that maybe

CHARLES

Maybe

ISSIE

You can know what's real.

[Breath.]

CHARLES

Shadows haul erstwhile remembering

ISSIE

Take comfort

LUKE

In the slow beating

ISSIE

Of the human This is

CHARLES

Not what I imagined

ISSIE

This is

LUKE

Not what I feared.

ISSIE

Holy and most precious We are drowning

CHARLES

And holler at the waves to

ISSIE/CHARLES/LUKE

Save us

CHARLES

From what we know not.

[Breath.]

ISSIE

Hold back

CHARLES

Give a kiss

LUKE

Stretch those lips wide. There's no harm in it.

ISSIE

I will

CHARLES

I will

[They kiss.]

LUKE

And the looking on-lookers can go to hell

[Breath.]

ISSIE

At the end of the day

CHARLES

In the waking hour

ISSIE

When you don't know what it is you're even doing

CHARLES

Or why

ISSIE

Listen

CHARLES

Listen

LUKE

Listen

ISSIE

To your heart.

[Blackout.]

(END OF PLAY.)